

To the Congress of the United States



THE TWELFTH REPORT

OF THE

United States
Advisory Commission
on Information



January, 1957

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The United States Advisory Commission on Information was created by the United States Information and Educational Exchange Act (Public Law 402) enacted by the 80th Congress on January 27, 1948.

This report covers the work of the Commission for the calendar year 1956. During the year, the Commission held eight meetings, two in Washington, five in New York, and one in New Haven.

On November 26, 1956, the President announced the recess appointment of Mr. Lewis W. Douglas, Sonoita, Arizona, to fill the vacancy on the Commission created by the resignation of Judge Justin Miller.

At its meeting on November 13, the Commission adopted the following Resolution:

"Mr. Theodore Streibert, who has devoted three of the best years of his life in the service of his Government, deserves great credit for the high quality leadership he has given the U. S. Information Agency, from the first day he took office until the day that he left. He has won the admiration and respect of the Commission, his staff in Washington and overseas, and that of scores of Governmental officials who have worked with him."

At its meeting on December 19, the new Director of USIA, Mr. Arthur Larson, met with the Commission. The Commission feels that the Agency is fortunate to have him as its new Director.

In pursuance of its need to add to its professional staff, the Commission appointed as its Staff Director, Mr. Louis T. Olom, who entered on duty June 21, 1956.

Special mention should be made of the activities of the two Agency Advisory Committees.

During the year, the Broadcast Advisory Committee held three two-day meetings in Washington. The membership of this committee is:

JOSEPH A. McDONALD
Acting Chairman
Assistant General Attorney
National Broadcasting Co.
New York City

ROGER W. CLIPP
General Manager
WFIL Radio Station
Philadelphia, Pa.

ROBERT T. COLWELL
Vice President
J. Walter Thompson Co.
New York City

DONLEY F. FEDDERSEN
Program Associate
Educational Television and
Radio Center
Ann Arbor, Mich.

RAYMOND F. GUY
Manager
Radio & Allocation Engineering
National Broadcasting Co.
New York City

RALPH N. HARMON
Vice President for Engineering
Westinghouse Broadcasting
Co., Inc.
New York City

JACK W. HARRIS
Vice President and General
Manager
Radio Station KPRC
Houston, Tex.

HENRY P. JOHNSTON
President and Managing
Director
Radio Stations WAPI, WAFM,
and WABT
Birmingham, Ala.

FRANK L. MARX
Vice President
American Broadcasting Co.
New York City

HOWARD MEIGHAN
Vice President
CBS Television City
Hollywood, Calif.

J. R. POPPELE
Consultant Television, Radio
Management and Engineering
South Orange, N. J.

During the past year the Agency enlarged the scope of activities of the Advisory Committee on Books Abroad to cover all of the cultural operations of the Information Center Service, increased its membership representation, changed the name to the Advisory Committee on Cultural Information, and redrafted its terms of reference.

This committee held four meetings during the year in Washington, D. C.

Dr. May is Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Cultural Information. Its present members are:

GEORGE P. BRETT, Jr.

President of the Macmillan Co.
New York City

ROBERT B. DOWNS

Director of Libraries
University Library
University of Illinois
Urbana, Ill.

WILLIAM A. M. BURDEN

President Museum of Modern Art
New York City

CHARLES W. FERGUSON

Sr. Editor Reader's Digest
Pleasantville, N. Y.

ROBERT L. CROWELL

President
Thomas Y. Crowell Co.
New York, N. Y.

FREEMAN LEWIS

Executive Vice President
Pocket Books, Inc.
New York City

CHARLES E. ODEGAARD

Dean, College of Literature,
Science, and the Arts
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Mich.

Why does the U. S. Government need an International Information Agency?

Twentieth century governments must be concerned with foreign public opinion. The strategic, commercial and political interests of the United States require that U. S. objectives, policies, and actions be accurately presented and explained to the world.

So long as the United States is a leader of the free world it must have a strong information organization, completely staffed and able to move quickly and effectively.

And so long as the USSR and Communist China remain bent on world domination, there is another equally important need. It is for the free nations constantly to reveal to the world communist aims and intentions by evidence and by exposure.

Recent events in Hungary provide a clear example. There has been a revelation of the true nature of International Communism. There has been vindication of our efforts to expose it to the world. Now the United States must keep that exposure alive. And it must continue to present, explain and dramatize the contrasting advantages of our democratic faith.

Hungary is just one example. The need to show up communist hypocrisy and to advance the case for freedom is more widely apparent today than ever before.

Therefore, once again this Commission brings to the attention of the Congress the continued need for an international information agency.

Certainly the need for a world-wide voice for this country would appear to be permanent. However, the precise form

and the sponsorship and workings of an information agency will change to meet new circumstances and changing conditions.

This Commission believes that in the foreseeable future international information should be the responsibility of a government agency. It feels that the work of the United States Information Agency (USIA) could not be done by private organizations.

It is felt however that private enterprise can be of great help. Government facilities and information should be made available whenever feasible to privately owned U. S. media to facilitate their dissemination of information commercially to foreign customers.

In addition, private groups and organizations as in the recently launched People-to-People program should be encouraged and assisted in the development of projects that will supplement the work of Government agencies.

What are USIA's achievements?

The Agency's own semi-annual reports to Congress provide a detailed and specific record of its successful programs and operations.

Certain general achievements however are also worth mentioning. These include:

- A. *It has increased its effectiveness.*** USIA has continued to improve its operations, and has built up a highly effective organization capable of delivering messages quickly and via many media to large sectors of the world's population. This includes the ability to reach people effectively behind the Iron Curtain.
- B. *It has been dependably accurate.*** This has been a year of crisis after crisis. At such times it is particularly im-

portant that information policy and programs do not vary from U.S. foreign policy. As a result, the tasks confronting USIA were often difficult—and delicate.

This Commission believes these tasks were well handled. USIA policies, which guide all media operations and field units as directives on information, were developed in close cooperation with the Department of State. Special concern about programs and careful attention to content enabled USIA to uphold its record as an accurate reporter of U. S. policies.

C. It has played an important role at international conferences. The Department of State has utilized increasingly the USIA in Washington and in the field to publicize the proceedings of international conferences. SEATO and NATO meetings, the London Disarmament Conferences, the Summit Meeting at Geneva, and some United Nations Sessions are instances when the Department of State assigned USIA members the task of acting as the principal briefing and information officer for the U. S. delegation. The achievement of this close relationship between information and U. S. foreign policy in action enabled the Agency to expose communist propaganda tactics at international conferences, as well as to present accurately the U. S. position.

D. It has also been active in the following ways. The Commission does not wish to duplicate the Agency's semi-annual report to Congress. However, in reviewing Agency programs, it was felt that certain activities were deserving of special mention in this report. These include:

1. The launching of the Russian-language magazine, "America Illustrated."
2. A sharp increase in the book translation program, so

that USIA libraries abroad now have many more books in the native language of the country.

3. The inauguration of the low-priced, paper-bound book program to meet the communist cultural drive in South Asia and the Far East.

4. The construction and distribution of exhibits dramatizing such U. S. themes as "Atoms for Peace", the President's "Open Skies" inspection program, and "People's Capitalism."

5. The publicizing of U. S. participation in trade fairs in many countries.

6. Arranging and publicizing in the field the cultural presentation program administered by the Department of State under the President's Fund.

7. The successful administration by USIA's Cultural and Public Affairs Officers in the field of the Department of State's exchange-of-persons program.

8. The production of the Sukarno film, based on the visit of President Sukarno of Indonesia to the United States, and production of the regular monthly motion picture newsreel, "Our Times".

9. The development of two new radio programs, "Music USA", and "Panorama USA", a program about life in the United States. Both have gained large audiences in the free world, as well as in countries behind the Soviet curtain.

10. A substantial increase in the development and use of USIA materials for television abroad.

11. The organization of a Junior Officers' training program.

12. The assignment of eleven research officers abroad, and the use of public opinion polling and survey techniques where possible.

How can these achievements be evaluated?

In attempting to evaluate the achievements of USIA a curious paradox occurs. Evaluation of results behind the Iron Curtain is easier than of results in front of it.

In communist countries there are almost no statistics available of the audience reached by international broadcasting. But there are many evidences of dramatic results. Reports by defectors and refugees, by travelers, by U. S. officials, remarks by Soviet and satellite leaders, and attacks by official communist news services flow in as constant confirmation of USIA effectiveness.

From the free world, on the other hand, there are many statistics of audiences, of viewers, and readers, and listeners. But there is little information available on the actual effectiveness and net impact of the Agency's operations.

A message to be effective, must not only be received by its intended audience, it must be understood and believed. The latter is difficult to measure. The Agency has relied upon the judgment and observations of Ambassadors, Public Affairs Officers assisted by eleven Research Officers, Area Directors, Media Chiefs, and Inspectors for reports of effectiveness.

There are other indications that prove helpful. For example, it is observed that when the Agency closes out a library and information center, or reduces a post or an installation, this invariably produces protests from the people of the host country.

At its best, however, evaluation of USIA work remains uneven. The Commission has repeatedly urged that greater emphasis be placed upon the task of measuring the effectiveness and impact of the total USIA effort. A beginning has been made. The use of research and public opinion polls are

steps in the right direction. But the Commission again urges that special attention be given to this crucial area.

What limiting factors affect USIA?

There are certain things that stand in the way of acceptance of USIA's messages around the world. Among these limiting factors are:

1. The U. S. Government must make its foreign policy decisions faced with the dilemmas of the troubled world. Because of divided opinion in the world, these opinions will please some, will displease others. As a result, receptiveness of USIA's messages will be high in certain areas, low in others. This cannot be avoided. It emphasizes the necessity for an official U. S. voice which—whether what it says is pleasing or displeasing—will be believed, because its reputation for honesty and integrity is beyond suspicion.
2. The unflattering, seamy side of U. S. life is often vividly portrayed by motion pictures, paper-back books, and other U. S. commercial media. Acceptance of such media abroad, and belief in their sensationalism by people who have little else to judge us by, severely limits the acceptance of USIA's less sensational, but far more accurate picture of life in the United States.
3. Some foreign media play up out of all proportion unfortunate domestic incidents from the United States. Their unrealistic emphasis also creates false impressions of life in this country, and makes it harder for USIA to register the truth.
4. Conflicting statements by high government officials, members of Congress, and others also tend to create

confusion abroad. In addition, such statements when they do not agree with USIA statements on policy as developed with the Department of State, generate doubt as to just what the U. S. policy and position really is.

5. Also limiting USIA acceptance abroad are restrictions against overseas visitors to the United States. Stringent visa requirements, fingerprinting, and other hurdles not only cut down tourism to the United States, but often put our country in an unfavorable light in the eyes of people abroad.

These are some of the limitations, the built-in road blocks that face the U. S. information program around the world. This Commission feels that their existence should be recognized, their effect realized.

What are USIA's major problems?

As this report has pointed out, there has been substantial encouraging progress in the workings—and the work—of USIA. It is staffed with dedicated, able government career people. Their abilities are showing positive results.

However, many problems remain. The major ones are listed below.

1. How to improve evaluation. This problem has already been mentioned. It relates to the Agency's lack of a systematic, continuing appraisal of the results of its work. The Commission realizes that precise measurement is not possible, that evaluations can only be approximate. It also believes that improvements can, and should, be made.
2. How can USIA sympathetically meet the questions raised by increasing nationalism without in any way infringing on the rights of other nations, including the right of each nation to select its own form of government?

Soviet military intervention in that country has shaken international communism's cohesion. The dissension within communist parties of the free world and the resignations of well known communists from their parties are indications that world communism has suffered a heavy blow.

This situation presents USIA not only with an opportunity, but with two new tasks.

FIRST, the world, East and West, must not be permitted to forget the tragic lesson of Hungary, with its evidence of Soviet imperialism and brutality—and its subsequent weakening of world communism.

SECOND, and at the same time, the U. S. should prepare and execute a carefully planned information program exploiting the weaknesses of communism and contrasting them with the strengths of freedom.

In planning such a program, certain additional tasks in which the Agency would cooperate with other departments of the Government might include the following:

1. A restatement of the successful principles of freedom for individuals, the relationship of such principles to national independence and to a free society, and their particular application to newly developing areas.
2. The continuing reassertion of the obligations of all member-nations of the UN to the charter and the principles of that organization.
3. Giving increasing emphasis to the conviction that the precepts and doctrines of the free world are the inevitable wave of the future.
4. Encouraging the release of man's creative genius in cultural, scientific, and educational fields as a step toward peace and freedom.
5. Providing a special information program for Iron Curtain refugees and defectors.

6. Increasing information facilities in newly created independent nations, especially on the continent of Africa, to help them in their efforts to build strong economic and political communities that are free from communistic influence.

Carrying out these tasks, and achieving maximum effect for the entire U. S. information program will be greatly advanced if, as often as is feasible, the President spells out to the world as he has in the past, the intentions and policies of the United States. For it is a basic maxim that the most effective and enduring impact abroad is made by a nation's top political leadership.

Now, the Commission addresses itself to two specific questions about the United States Information Agency. What has been its record as an independent agency? What should its budget be?

What has been the record of USIA as an independent agency?

It is the opinion of the Commission that the Agency should remain independent, for three reasons:

1. *It has a good record.* During the past three and a half years USIA has proved groundless the fears that it could not operate well if separated from the Department of State. It has evolved effective methods of getting foreign policy guidance from the Department of State. And it has demonstrated its ability to function in the field as a helpful and important part of the Ambassador's team.
2. *It has operating flexibility.* Independent status has enabled USIA to shift personnel, material, and funds quickly and effectively in order to meet sudden opportunities and international crises. The existing organization is as flexible as conditions demand.

3. *Its position in Government*—More than ever before the Agency plays an important role in the national security structure of the U. S. government. The Director is a full-fledged voting member of OCB. He attends NSC meetings, and Cabinet meetings. At the present moment it seems right that the government's information arm should be so well considered at the highest policy-making levels. The Commission would like to stress again its conviction that USIA can serve most effectively at those levels if it is an independent agency.

What should the USIA budget be?

It is neither the Commission's desire nor its responsibility to advise as to the proper level of the Agency's budget. Certain facts however may have a bearing.

It is clear that we stand at a great juncture in world events. Conditions for disseminating information about U. S. policies, intentions, and programs are at their most favorable point since 1945. The emerging role of the UN, the increasing problems facing world communism, U. S. support of the new-nation building programs, and the long-range peaceful plans of the United States are among the important messages that must be conveyed to the world.

In the light of this need, and facing the expanded opportunities for service, it seems logical that some expansion of the budget would be in order. Certainly, the budget should be large enough to permit the USIA to meet successfully the challenge that is before it.

Recommendations to Congress

To strengthen the Agency's capacity to cope with the tasks and opportunities ahead, and especially to fortify the morale of its officers who serve abroad, the Commission renews its past recommendation that the Congress act favorably on the following:

1. The need for legislation to establish a career service for USIA officers who serve abroad.

The reasons for this recommendation are:

- a) The present system of temporary appointments offers little promise of a career and no assurance of tenure to officers overseas.
 - b) Establishment of a career corps for top professional officers, with tenure, compensation, and perquisites more comparable to those of State Department Foreign Service Officers, would make it possible for USIA to attract and retain more highly qualified personnel.
 - c) The intimate daily working relations that exist between the State Department and USIA personnel abroad argues for a close parallelism of personnel systems.
2. The need to provide adequate funds for representation and field contact purposes.

The reasons for this recommendation are:

- a) Representation and personal contact by the Agency's senior officers overseas are vital and necessary factors in operating with important individuals and groups in foreign countries.
- b) Funds currently made available for such services are not sufficient to cover minimum needs. For example,

one Foreign Affairs Officer in an important Far Eastern country received \$24 per year for representation, and the average figure for all USIA Foreign Service officers is only \$115.00 per year.

c) These officers are forced to spend their own funds in pursuit of their official duties. In the opinion of the Commission, this is a situation which lessens the effectiveness of USIA operations, is manifestly unfair to personnel, and should be worthy of correction.

In addition, the Commission also repeats the recommendations presented to the Congress in its Eleventh Report, that certain sections of Public Law 402, pertaining to the composition and work of the Commission, be amended as follows:

1. Amend section 602 (a) to increase the size of this Commission from five to seven.

The reasons for this recommendation are:

a) The members of this Commission are busy men. It is difficult to find times when as many as four of the five can meet. A larger number would provide a quorum for more frequent meetings.

b) Section 602 (b) of Public Law 402 specified that the members of this Commission "shall be selected from a cross section of professional, business, and public service backgrounds." The Commission does not regard itself presently as an adequate cross section. The addition of two members would make the Commission more representative.


2. Amend section 603 to require this Commission to report semi-annually to the Director (instead of quarterly), and annually to the Congress (instead of semi-annually).

The reasons for this recommendation are:

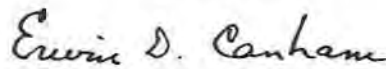
a) Experience has proved that the recommended schedule of reporting to the Director is all that is needed.

b) The Commission feels that a report to Congress late in January or early in February can be very useful, but a second report late in July or early in August will come too close to time for adjournment to serve any useful purpose.

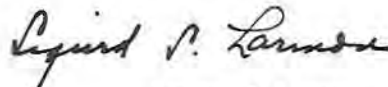
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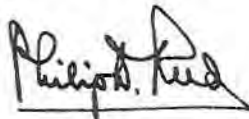
MARK A. MAY,
Chairman



ERWIN D. CANHAM



SIGURD S. LARMON



PHILIP D. REED

NOTE: Mr. Lewis Douglas who has received a recess appointment very late in the year covered by this report has for this reason not signed this report since he feels that he is not informed sufficiently regarding the operations of the information program.